

Rev. W. B. B. B.
A

REPLY 3

TO THE

REVEREND MR. WILLIAMS'S

ANSWER TO AN ESSAY,

SHEWING THAT

*Oil Mandates for Days of Public Worship are
no Argument against joining in it."*

BY K

JOHN SIMPSON.

BATH,

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M DCC XCIV.



A

REPLY &c.

DEAR SIR,

I Have endeavoured to read, with attention and impartiality, the letter which you have written to me in answer to a few pages which I printed last year, to shew that civil mandates for days of public worship were no argument against joining in it; and I beg leave to represent to you the result of my perusal of it.

We both agree, that the laws of Christ are the rule of a Christian's conduct in those cases in which he has given laws. And in those in which he has not given any, I imagine each Christian is to regulate his conduct by what he judges to be agreeable to the laws of Christ. And it was on account of this necessary distinction that I used the phrase of, "Christ being the sole lawgiver of the church," thinking that this would properly comprehend both; as the person who sincerely acknowledges any one to be

be his moral and religious lawgiver, will, of course, not merely observe the statutes which he has expressly laid down, but will act agreeably to what he judges to be the true spirit and intention of those laws, in every other case, respecting which, no particular precept is given. I never imagined that these could be considered as "equivocal terms," which you suggest, they are in p. 1. of your letter. And even though the phrase were of doubtful interpretation, the illustrations I have given in the next paragraph of the idea which I meant to convey, and the reference I have made (p. 8.) to Bishop HOADLEY's sermon to prove and explain it, will, I hope, convince you, upon reconsideration, that I could not even intend to use the terms in an equivocal manner.

If I have rightly understood you, the topics which you controvert are, the consistency of any act of national worship with christian liberty; the duty of public fasting and humiliation, unless there be evidence of general penitence; and the propriety and necessity of observing any particular day for this purpose which is appointed by civil authority, though national humiliation were acknowledged to be a duty; especially when we cannot approve the motives from which the appointment originated, or which are specified in it.

You say, in your letter addressed to me, (p. 6.)
 "that religious acts performed at the same time by
 "all

all the individuals of a nation, are of importance in themselves; and consistent with the spirit of the christian religion, are points which you have taken for granted, but which are liable to some objections." In the same page you add, "I conceive, that, in your view, the only object of uniting the multitude is, that *the people in a collective capacity* may engage in an act expressive either of humiliation, of penitence, of *thankfulness* for the mercies which they have received, of dependance on God, &c. But how can it be admitted, that *such national religious acts* are consistent with the principles of religious liberty, when it is obvious, that they cannot be accomplished, unless some person be invested with authority to *appoint those acts*, and to *fix the time* of performing them; which involves in it a concession, that an individual may be a proper judge of the occasion of appointing them, and may exercise the power of doing it."

In reply to this, I must request you to attend to what you yourself have advanced in p. 28, 29, and 36, of your letter. You there say, "the profession of christianity does not require us to forget that we are members of society, or to sacrifice our privileges as such.—Since societies of men are as dependent on the Supreme Being as individuals, public worship may as properly be conducted in a manner which re-

"gards

“ regards the social interests of mankind, as private
 “ devotion is allowed to comprehend the interests
 “ the individual. If I may pray for those things
 “ which appear to me to be conducive to my personal
 “ sonal happiness, a number of persons, with the
 “ same propriety, may pray for those things which
 “ they consider as conducive to their happiness in
 “ *collective capacity*. It is on this ground that we
 “ incorporate with our *public prayers* petitions for
 “ kings, princes, and magistrates; for the prosperity
 “ rity and welfare of our country; for the establishment
 “ ment and continuance of our civil privileges, &c.
 “ These are political ideas, but we do not consider
 “ them as improper to be introduced into a religious
 “ service on that account. If all such were to be
 “ excluded from devotional exercises, the appointment
 “ ment of a day for a public fast or THANKSGIVING
 “ GIVING would be absurd. Our religious service
 “ on such days, must have no reference to our circumstances
 “ cumstances AS A NATION.” And in p. 36 you
 say, “ an act of *national worship*, I presume, is to be
 “ considered as an act of the people in their *collective*
 “ *capacity*. The mercies for which they offer up
 “ their *praises* and *thanksgivings* are those which
 “ they receive *as a nation*. The sins which they are
 “ called upon to confess, are not those of a personal
 “ nature; but those which attach themselves to individuals
 “ individuals *as members of the society* to which they
 “ belong.” What may be considered as a *national*

of worship you further describe, (p. 9.) "If it be found to be the *voluntary act* of the people, and that all, or the greatest part of them, engaged in it, it must be admitted to be a national act, though performed by different societies, in different places, at different times;" (p. 7.) or at one time. An application to parliament is considered as the act of the *nation*, if it be found to have proceeded from all or most of the inhabitants of the cities and towns, though perhaps it *originated with one, or a few.*"

Now, as *I* "have taken it for granted, that national worship is of importance, and consistent with the spirit of the christian religion," (which I thought it unnecessary to prove) so *you* have urged, in the passage just quoted, some of the arguments for it, on which these ideas appeared to me to have been grounded. Every Sunday, then, and every fifth of November, on your own principles, an act of national worship is performed, "consistently with the principles of religious liberty," though civil mandates apply to both days for fixing the time, and in both cases enjoin the use of the liturgy of the church of England. For you say, (p. 13, 14) "the Dissenters are not chargeable with any inconsistency in observing the fifth of November for a day of thanksgiving." And, (p. 15) "that they are justified in assembling on Sundays."

We

We may further observe, that the same religious liberty which we exercise in interpreting the laws of Christ for ourselves, is the right of all christians. Agreeably to this you observe, (p. 23) "Dissenters do not desire to prevent others from conforming to that mode of worship, or from observing those seasons for it which their consciences most approve." It cannot surely then, upon this principle, be an objection to our voluntarily joining in an act of national worship, that the church of England approve the mode of appointing a day for *themselves only*, by royal proclamation; when, as you willingly admit, (p. 4) the authority of this does not extend to Dissenters," and therefore is no infringement upon their religious liberty.

Upon the same principles on which you have argued for national worship in general, and for occasional days of national thanksgiving, I would argue for the duty of occasional national humiliation for sin, in cases that peculiarly call for it. And, as I think you have controverted the duty of national fasting joined with this, only on account of the authority exerted in the appointment of a particular day for observing it, it is unnecessary now to consider fasting separately from other acts of public humiliation. Reason and scripture, however, appear to me to unite in recommending fasting as an occasional means of promoting virtue and piety.

Against

Against national humiliation you urge, (p. 37) when the people of a nation unite in such worship, "they should be well assured that there is a previous disposition to forsake those crimes which they profess to lament." If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the LORD will not hear us at any time. In our habitual public worship, therefore, as well as in our occasional, on your supposition, we should be well assured of the sincerity of our fellow-worshippers. But what human means can exactly ascertain this with respect to the majority of a nation, or even of a single church? On this ground, I imagine, public worship could not be continued. Do we not every Sunday join in an act of national christian worship with persons guilty of great vices, and even with persons who have been concerned in the performance of the very acts which you specify; though you add, (p. 38) "while those evils existed, how could any one presume to present himself as a true penitent before Almighty God?" There seems to be no impropriety or presumption in a sincere mind joining with others to lament before God his own sins, and the sins of the nation, however enormous they may be, and praying for general reformation. In public acts of humiliation, as in all other acts of devotion, whether public or private, it is indeed seriously incumbent upon every individual to take heed that his own heart be right before God. And for this alone, I imagine, is he accountable.

If

If he himself be a true penitent, and desires and endeavours to promote his own reformation and improvement in true religion and virtue, and to do what he can to promote the same in others, who can doubt of his worship being accepted? while he who still indulges in vice will incur the divine displeasure. I know not that God has any where required it of the sincere worshipper, that he be assured of the sincerity of any one of his fellow-worshippers before he assembles with them. No one but the Great Searcher of hearts can know what is in man. To him, therefore, it becomes us to leave those who join with us in national worship.

In p. 25, you say, "in order to be such (namely, true and spiritual) " worshippers, in observing the " late fast, it seemed to me to be necessary the Dissenters and all other persons should have been " thoroughly satisfied that they did it with those " views with which it would generally be supposed " they observed it." The command of Christ, to worship in spirit and in truth, I apprehend, enjoins the sincere devotion of the mind evidencing itself in the life and conversation. It does not appear to me that it enters at all into the nature and essence of our own spiritual worship, that we previously consider what ideas other people are likely to form of our conduct in this respect. We do not think this necessary to the sincerity of our habitual public worship on Sundays. Why, then, is it necessary on occasions

nal fast days? It is, I believe, generally supposed of Unitarians, by those who do not know them, that they are not christians, and that they do not use the worship of christians. But, notwithstanding this, we constantly use true christian worship. Now, if our worship be such as we think, on mature examination, to be agreeable to the gospel; and if our temper and behaviour correspond with it, I believe we may be fairly reckoned to worship as christians, in spirit and in truth; whether other people think us deists or hypocrites, or any thing else. Whether evil report or good report await us, it does not affect our sincerity either on the Sunday or on a fast day.

But were it even proper that the opinion of others should have any influence upon our conduct, it would operate both ways. If the opinion of other people, that we countenance the political purposes of the proclamation by assembling on the day it appoints, should engage us to omit worshipping at all; why should not the opinion of the same people, that we are unfavourable to public worship and to good government, if we do not meet, engage us to assemble? The opinion of others operating both ways must be regarded only so far as it agrees with what is right, independently of their opinion. What can the sincerity of any man's devotion have to do with the opinions of others concerning him? Is it not one characteristic of a person's sincerity, that he is solicitous *really* to think and act well, rather than to

to *appear* to others to do so; and that he perseveres in doing his duty, whether other people give him the credit of doing right or no, or even though they reproach and evil-treat him for it?

As the exercise of ecclesiastical authority in the church of England is your objection to an act of national humiliation in general, so you use the same plea against the observance of a particular day for that purpose. In p. 7, 9, and 11, you contend that a particular day for assembling is not necessary to a national act, which might be performed equally well by different societies meeting on different days. When any thing is a duty, it appears to me to be a necessary duty in every case in which there is a reason and an opportunity for performing it, and no other equal or greater duty demands attention, and if we are most likely to promote the good effects of it by adopting that particular time; and especially if we are not likely to have any other opportunity. That the nation collectively has sins to confess, and that in times of public calamity, which is increased by national and personal vices, there is peculiar ground for public humiliation, seems evident. This coincides with your reasoning in p. 28, 29, and 36, quoted above. Now, on occasional seasons for national worship, there is no probability that the majority will join with the minority at any other time, or in any other way, than what they approve. It is not reasonable to expect they should; and you seem

to allow this, when you say (p. 23) Dissenters “do not desire to prevent others from conforming to that mode of worship, or from observing those *seasons* for it, which their own consciences approve.” Nor is it at all probable, that the different churches of the minority, meeting on different days, will keep the same object in view. And the good effect of any national religious act is likely to be the greatest, when the greatest number unite in performing it properly.

If some particular time, then, be not agreed upon, there is the highest probability that a united act of worship would not be performed at all, or if it were, the effect would be diminished. Accordingly, you yourself have argued respecting an act of national worship, p. 14. “The reason the Dissenters are not chargeable with any inconsistency, in observing the 5th of November is, that the observation of any other day would not so well answer the purpose; and therefore the circumstance of time is not a matter of indifference. If it were, it would be incumbent upon them, as on the 19th of April, not to observe the day fixed upon by authority, but some other, in order to enter their protest against the exercise of a power which makes the observance of any one day essential.” But, upon the principle that a particular day is not necessary, why would not the 4th of November have answered the purpose as well as the 5th? In
favour

favour of this, you might have urged, that the precise day was as unnecessary as for a fast. For, as King William's birth-day was on the 4th of November, and as his intention was to have landed in England on the same day of the year, but he was prevented only by a fog which deceived the pilots, and as the coals and faggots that were prepared for the plot, and the person who was to execute it were discovered on the 4th, the gunpowder on the midnight between the 4th and 5th, either of those days must have been a matter of indifference; and, therefore, in order to oppose the authority of the appointer, it was necessary to observe the 4th. The 5th, therefore, is no more necessary, on your principles, than the 4th, or any other day. Its usefulness is the ground of your preference. And this is the very ground upon which I have argued for the nation observing the same day for public humiliation, (*Civil Mand. &c.* p. 4) because another would not so well tend "to promote the good effects of it."

But you assert, (p. 17) that, "to observe a day of public worship, appointed by the king, is, in that instance, to acknowledge his authority to appoint that day. It is of no consequence, that an individual, or a number of persons, did not observe other days appointed by the same authority; or that they profess generally that they do not acknowledge it. Nonconformity, in other instances,

stances, has no connection with those in which we do conform." In p. 19 and 43, you repeat the same sentiment in different language. But how the observation of the fast-day by us can fairly be considered as any thing more than a free and voluntary act, I cannot comprehend consistently with what you willingly admit p. 4, "that the authority of a royal proclamation does not extend to Dissenters." For their concurrence with the nation in the day for observing the fast, does not admit of being construed as a submission to ecclesiastical authority, when you allow that there was not any such, nor even civil authority, exercised over them. The reasons, then, for observing the day, according to our own sentiments, remain in full force, notwithstanding the proclamation.

The members of the established church, in their public worship, acknowledge the king's ecclesiastical supremacy, and consequently his authority, to appoint a day for them. And while they exercise their christian liberty in this way, we equally exercise ours by assenting to the day; because we judge it to be most useful to assemble at the time when the majority will unite with us. Thus we all join in one act of national worship, upon the broad basis of our common christianity, as interpreted by each person's private judgment. Upon the principle of greater utility, you assent, p. 14, "to an act of national thanksgiving the 5th of November, and to the
" use

“ use of the same translation of the bible which is
 “ authoritatively appointed to be read in churches;”
 and I plead this very reason for adopting the same
 day for national humiliation. And as you allow the
 former do not involve an acknowledgment of eccle-
 siastical authority, how can the latter do this? This
 argument seems to me to be evidently conclusive,
 without “ refinement or subtlety.” And it appears
 to be confirmed by what you say, p. 16, “ In those
 “ cases in which the performance of a necessary
 “ duty is sanctioned by the civil magistrate, we can
 “ only enter a verbal and general protest against his
 “ interference. But when the same authority makes
 “ that essential which is indifferent, we are called
 “ upon to disregard it.” Now it cannot be said
 that the common translation of the Bible is necessary
 and essential to public worship, because there are
 other versions. It is, however, more useful; as is
 also the appointed day for public humiliation.

To illustrate your position, that voluntarily con-
 forming to a day appointed by the king is acknow-
 ledging his ecclesiastical authority, you add, “ I am
 “ happy to support this argument, by referring to
 “ the conduct of the Dissenters in a parallel case re-
 “ specting the test act of Charles the II^d. It might
 “ be urged, that it is well known, Dissenters do not
 “ allow the authority of the legislature to appoint
 such

such tests; and when they occasionally receive the Lord's Supper at the altar of the established church, it must be understood, that they do it with other views and from other motives, than those of qualifying for a civil office." But I apprehend that this case is rather a contrast than a parallel, and that it by no means supports your argument. The fact of a dissenter's taking the test, affords ample and peculiar evidence, that he does take it for the purpose of qualifying for a civil office. For though the Christian and religious disposition of a Dissenter's mind on such an occasion, may be united with the temporal view; yet that it cannot be purely religious, is proved by his leaving his usual place of worship, to receive the Lord's Supper administered in a mode which he does not approve, with the avowed and acknowledged purpose of qualifying for a civil office, and to exempt him from the civil disadvantages, consequent upon an omission of this. If this were not his clear and determinate purpose, why does he not observe the ordinance at his own place, and in his usual manner. And when any accusation is brought against a person, for omitting this test when required, he produces legal evidence of the fact, in order to bar any proceedings against him. A Dissenter, then, by complying with the test act, obeys a law which appropriates an ordinance, that was instituted by Christ for a purely religious purpose, to a civil one also, by which he gains civil ad-

vantages, and avoids civil evils; and gives a tacit approbation to the ecclesiastical constitution and service of the Church of England, by submitting to the order, that he shall go to that particular church to receive it, though in a mode which he disapproves. But the very reverse, in every instance, is the case when a Dissenter observes the fast in his own place of worship, and for a purely religious purpose. For then, though the proclamation commands persons to assemble in the established church, and to conform to the service of it, and also unites a civil view with the religious one; the Dissenter assembles with others in his own place, uses a service agreeable to his own sentiments, rejects the political view, and chooses the religious one only; and by doing this he gains no civil advantage, and avoids no civil evil. And even by assenting to the time he obeys no authority, for you “willingly admit (p. 4) that authority does not extend to Dissenters.”

I must enter my protest, therefore, against the application you make, on this occasion, of a sentence quoted from me, in your letter (p. 18;) that “if a political principle be assigned in a political instrument for discharging a religious duty, we may nevertheless act from a religious principle.” But a religious principle here, it is evident, from the whole paragraph in which the sentence is introduced, that I meant a pure and unmixed religious principle. For the purpose of the paragraph is to distinguish political

political from religious principles. But the secular views which I have shewn must of necessity mix with the religious purpose in taking the test, manifest your application of what I have said to be inaccurate. And the sentence immediately preceding that which you have quoted, is, “even though we disapprove the motive, this is no reason why we should not perform what we think our own duty, from what appears to us a proper motive.” Now I believe neither you nor I think it our duty to receive the Lord’s Supper in the Church of England, nor is this plea used by Dissenters who take the test; therefore the application of what you quote from me to the test, is inadmissible. But we do think it our duty to assemble in our own places for public worship on a Sunday, and we then distinguish the Christian and religious motives upon which we act, from the political principles of political instruments which enjoin the religious observation of that day. A denial of this, implies an assertion, that Dissenters usually meet for public worship, in obedience to the civil power as well as to Christ. And on the 5th of November, either this distinction between political and religious motives for worship must be made, or obedience to ecclesiastical authority must be admitted as one of the motives for assembling on that day. That it is proper and a duty to distinguish between the political and religious motive of the appointer of any thing of a religious nature, may be further

illustrated by another instance. Smollet says of Henry the VIIIth, what I suppose will be generally believed, that he wrested the supremacy from the bishop of Rome, “ partly on conscientious motives, “ and partly from reasons of state and conveniency.” And one convenience was to support his connection with Ann Bullen. But notwithstanding this, Protestants were then, and are now, justified in countenancing his rejection of the authority of the Pope, upon the pure principles of religion and christianity, without adopting or manifesting any approbation of either his political or licentious views, by their concurrence with his conscientious motives. A distinction between the political motives and conduct, and the religious views and actions in this instance, is the ground of one of the strongest arguments for a dissent from the Church of England, and the principal, if not the only one, that is common to Protestant Dissenters of every description. And why should a distinction, on which we ground our habitual public worship, be thought an improper one for occasional public worship?

When you assert, (p. 13) that “ the *motive* of “ those who *uniformly* disregard the appointment of “ days of public worship, when the observance of “ any particular day is a matter of indifference, *can* “ be but one, that of testifying their disapprobation “ of such appointment,” I conceive this is inaccurate. In such cases, there may possibly be other motives,

motives, as an indifference about, or an objection to all public worship; or a general disregard to or disbelief of revealed religion, on the principles of which public worship is conducted, &c. And the argument, though allowed, would be of no use to you, because you plead for observing the 5th of November, which we ~~shall afterwards shew~~ ^{have} ^{p. 13/14.} to be as much a matter of indifference, as the 19th of April.

You think (p. 21) “ that the Dissenters have lost a very favourable opportunity, of entering their protest against the interference of the civil magistrate in religious matters.” But was it a very favourable opportunity for them to make any other protest, than that of worshipping as they thought right; when you “ willingly admit (p. 4) the authority does not extend to them,” and they, to whom it does extend, acknowledge it. The proclamation presented nothing peculiar to Dissenters, to call forth an extraordinary protest from them. If this mandate to the Church of England contained some sentiments which did not accord with those of Dissenters, it was usual in such instruments. And Dissenters habitually protest against all that concern them, by adhering and professing to adhere to the laws of Christ only, though they are thereby subjected to many civil disadvantages.

You observe, however, p. 38, referring to the form of prayer appointed for the 19th of April; “ when the services of religion, are made subservient
“ to

“to any purposes, but those for which they were
 “originally instituted, every friend of religion is
 “called upon to protest against the prostitution of
 “them.” I imagine that our protestation against
 the prostitution of religious services is made in the
 most public and effectual way, not by omitting re-
 ligious services, (for which, in this instance, you
 plead) but by performing them aright. The omis-
 sion of an act of religious worship seems to be a
 way of signifying that we do not think it to be a
 duty, but it is not a protest against the misapplication
 of a service, when we have an opportunity of wor-
 shipping properly. The direct argument from the
 abuse or perversion of any duty, is to the correction
 of the abuse, not to the omission of the duty. The
 bad purposes to which others may apply a religious
 service, does not diminish our obligations to worship
 in spirit and in truth. Accordingly, you allow (p.
 15) that “as civil authority should never influence
 “us to do what is wrong, so it should never induce
 “us to omit what is right.”

The best way, then, of protesting against civil
 authority in religious concerns, and against the pro-
 stitution of religious services, is to avow the gospel
 as our only guide, whether civil power favour or op-
 pose it, and to worship at those times and in that man-
 ner which we think agreeable to it, to whatever pur-
 poses others may apply their devotions. How did
 Daniel protest against Darius’s impious decree, but
 by

by worshipping the true God, as he had done afore-
time. And when this decree was reversed, and
another made to enjoin the worship of Jehovah, he
only continued to act upon his habitual steady
principle. How did Christ protest against super-
stition and hypocrisy, countenanced by the Jewish
rulers, but by enjoining a supreme regard to the pure
law of God, and by worshipping, and commanding
his disciples to worship, in spirit and in truth. Was
not the noblest and most useful protest which the
reformers made against popery, that of maintaining
the right of private judgment, and substituting a
service more suitable to the gospel. They acted
upon the principles which they professed, instead of
declining to act at all. A verbal protestation is of
little use, when compared with a correspondent con-
duct. The laws of Christ enjoin the greatest be-
nevolent and religious activity. While the statutes
of the realm, therefore, make the Lord's Supper oc-
casionally subservient to a purpose different from that
for which it was instituted, Dissenters do not, on
this account, omit to observe the ordinance, but re-
ceive it for the sole purpose for which it was ap-
pointed by Christ. If I have rightly understood the
purpose of a dissent from the Church of England, it
is, in order practically to maintain the doctrine of
Christ's sole supremacy over his church, and to have
what we esteem a worship more suited to the genuine
principles of Christianity. In whatever cases, there-
fore,

fore, we see others perverting Christian worship, it seems to me to be a part of our duty, upon the principles we hold, to set an example of worshipping in spirit and in truth. And when we think that others fast for strife or debate, or wickedness of any kind, we should observe such a fast as God hath chosen, such a humiliation of soul and body as shall produce a hatred of all vice, and the love and practice of true piety and virtue. We shall then use pure Christian worship, as we profess to do on other days, to which civil injunctions apply. And thus we shall manifest to the world by a public act, as we do every Sunday, how we can distinguish, agreeably to our Christian principles, between “the things that are Cæsar’s, “and the things that are God’s.”

You think, however, (p. 25, 26) “that every “one who did not approve of the *motive*, in which “the proclamation for the late fast *originated*, should “not have observed it.” If this be an objection to observing it, it is necessary to ascertain, with some precision, what this motive was. Now in all political transactions, I believe it is difficult, if not impossible, for people in general to gain a knowledge of the true motive of the first promoters of them. This supposition is confirmed by what Lord Chesterfield says in one of his letters to his son, that he himself, while he was a secretary of state, was sometimes employed in executing measures, the origin of which he was unacquainted with. And I have
heard

heard it related of Sir Robert Walpole, that when he had resigned the helm of government, some friend advised him to read history for his amusement; but Sir Robert replied, how do you think that I can be amused with history, when I know that no historian will be able to trace the transactions of my own ministry to their real source. We cannot doubt, I think, that public men sometimes propose good measures, with a view to accomplish their own interested or ambitious purposes, as well as from regard to the public. But if on mature deliberation, any measures thus proposed appear evidently to be right, and for the general benefit, whatever may be the inward motives of the proposer, the measure itself ought to be supported.

If the mixture of a bad motive with a good one, in the appointer of any thing of a religious nature, be a proper reason for our declining to adopt what he proposes, though we approve it, this would have justified the people of England, in not reading the first translation of the whole bible, that was ever printed in Britain, in their own language. For Bishop Burnet, in his History of the Reformation, informs us, that the arguments for a new translation of the bible, joined with the power which Queen Ann Bullen had in his affections, (and with whom he had intimate converse, while Catharine Seymour was his wife) were so much considered by the king, that he gave orders for setting about it immediately.

Burnet's

Burnet's History of the Reformation, London 1681, F. 1, 195. If it be said, the duty of reading the bible is superior to that of obedience to human authority, so also is our duty to observe what we think that bible enjoins, and what we think its spirit and design dictates. And whoever judges national worship to be agreeable to the gospel, either for thanksgiving, as you do on the 5th of November; or for fasting and humiliation, as I have done on the 19th of April; or for the expression and increase of public and private piety and virtue in general, as we both do on Sundays, is bound to observe those days for such purposes when he has opportunity, notwithstanding the interposition of any human authority, that may be exerted to enjoin them. On the ground then of the great difficulty, and almost impossibility, of coming at the true motive of the appointer; and also, as I conceive, the inutility of it to the present purpose, I cannot assent to an approbation of the *inward motive* as necessary, in order to join in an act of national worship.

As to an approbation of all the views and purposes, which *were pointed out in the proclamation*, p. 26, it is evident, that we ought not to conform to what we disapprove. But does the disapprobation of some of the declared views and purposes of the appointer which are more disputable and of less consequence, make it a duty to desist from forwarding the most important purposes, which he declares

he has in view, and which he approves. One acknowledged view in appointing Sunday as a day of public worship, is to encourage an attendance on the service of the Church of England, and in this is included an acknowledgment of the king's ecclesiastical supremacy; and it is the same on the 5th of November, besides other circumstances relative to this day, which we shall notice presently. But on both these days, Dissenters choose the most important view, that of Christian public worship, while they reject the others, and the appointed services, and use their own worship, suited to their own sentiments. By thus voluntarily assenting to the time for public worship, upon their own reasons, they think an obedience to the two first laws of Christ, love to God and love to man; and at the same time, the most pointed dissent from what they disapprove in civil mandates, as contrary to these laws, and to the law of Christ's supremacy, is best manifested. And the reason holds equally on any occasional days, when we approve the principal object of that act of public worship, and think the time a proper one. If an approbation of the originating and declared motives of the appointment be necessary to the observance of a day fixed by authority for worship, it is necessary to the observance of the 5th of November. One view by which King William was actuated, we may reasonably suppose, was to unite Britons, in order to humble the King of France. Some of those motives which influenced

influenced King James, are manifested in the act of parliament, and one of them was to aggrandize himself, as appears from this passage in it: "No nation of the earth has been blessed with greater benefits, than this nation now enjoys, having the true and free profession of the gospel, under our most gracious sovereign Lord King James, the most learned and religious king that ever reigned therein." And further on, "the plot would have turned to the utter ruin of this whole kingdom, had it not pleased Almighty God, by inspiring the king's most excellent majesty with a divine spirit, to interpret some dark phrases of a letter shewed to his Majesty, above and beyond all ordinary construction; thereby miraculously discovering this hidden treason, not many hours before the appointed time for the execution thereof." These passages are appointed to be read every 5th of November in the church, as a preface to the service; and therefore, according to your idea, are to be assented to by every one who observes the 5th of November. If you approve of the motive of King William, and not of those of King James, your argument, ^{h. 4. 4.} which allows of no separation of parts, is inadmissible. And if you reject the motives of both the kings, while you observe the 5th of November as a day of national worship, you make a distinction between the religious and political views, in the same political instrument. And this is what I am pleading for.

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I do not think, however, that Dissenters, by assembling on the 5th of November, were ever supposed to believe that the character of King James was so distinguished, or his reign so beneficial, as the act sets forth, or that he had any miraculous assistance in interpreting the letter that was given to Lord Monteagle. Nor would it have been just to have charged them with either, because it was well known that their principles were different, and that their services on the day refuted the charge. In the same manner the *habitual* conduct of Dissenters, in disavowing any other head of the church than Christ, and acting upon this sentiment, both in their habitual and occasional public worship, secures them from having it imputed to them, that they *habitually* or occasionally acknowledge any other ecclesiastical superior. Nay, were a Dissenter even to say that he acknowledged the same head of the church as the members of the establishment, the reply would be, your habitual professions and uniform conduct prove the contrary, you always avow Christ to be the only head, and you constantly worship at another church. Dissenters, by submitting to extraordinary expences, and other disadvantages on account of their dissent, prove that their principles are different from those of the Church of England, and that their conviction of them is sincere. This applies particularly to the doctrine of Christ's supremacy, as being a principal ground of their separation. The political opinions of Dissenters,

ters, will likewise be inferred from their usual professions and practice, and cannot be fairly misinterpreted by their observing occasional days of public worship, in which politics are not introduced. We understand Dissenters to maintain that civil and religious matters are so distinct, that their opinions and practices respecting either, cannot reasonably be inferred from what they think or do respecting the other. They hold religion to be unconnected with civil polity. With what propriety, then, can a Dissenter regulate his modes or seasons of public worship, by any regard to the judgment which other people may form of his political tenets? We are not either to do wrong, or to omit any duty, in order to prevent our good from being evil spoken of.

We may remark here, in answer to your quotation from M. Bourne, in a note p. 16, that in the case before us, upon your own principles, there is not the smallest right yielded up, because you acknowledge, "that the authority does not extend to Dissenters," (p. 4.)

But you think (p. 33) that "it became every one to consider whether he could observe the 10th of April, for the express purpose for which he was commanded to do it;" (*but you admit (p. 4) that Dissenters are not commanded*) "and whether he could sincerely and heartily assent to the truth of those sentiments, which he was called upon (*but Dissenters you allow, are not called upon*)"

"express

express in the most ^{usual} decent and solemn manner, in the presence of Almighty God. I do not exempt Dissenters from this obligation," (*but an exemption implied in what you admit, p. 4*) "upon the ground, that they ^{are} at liberty to use their own forms of worship, and to express their own sentiments and views; because I consider their meeting for public worship on that day, as an acquiescence in the design with which a religious service was appointed, and an assent to the sentiments which were incorporated in the devotional services of the established church, however contrary they might be to their own views, or opposite to the language of their own addresses to the Divine Being. Their external act, however it might be contradicted by their private conduct, or individual professions, was the strongest approbation." In p. 26 and 44, you express the same sentiment in different terms.

As far as I can judge, "there is too much refinement and subtlety in the argument above stated to be generally adopted," p. 17. And I really think, that this subtlety and refinement must be considerably increased, in order to shew that this and several other of your arguments, do apply to the 19th of April, and at the same time do not apply to the 5th of November. Upon the principles which you have stated, I do not perceive that Dissenters can avoid countenancing a service unsuitable to their own sentiments, if they worship on any day whatsoever that

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is appointed by a civil injunction. If assembling in a separate place, and using a different service, and avowing that we do this, because we interpret the gospel differently, if this be not a characteristic of our principles being different from those of the established church, what is? This is generally understood to be a decisive distinction in our habitual public worship. Why then does it not apply to our occasional assemblies? The fair mode of construction seems to be to interpret any single act of the same kind with the general habit as being conformable to it, if no sufficient reason can be assigned for its being a deviation from it. And a civil mandate for using the church service applies to a Sunday and to a 5th of November, as well as to the 19th of April. For the law commands "all persons to repair to the church on every Lord's day, and to exercise themselves in the duties of religion, publicly and privately." And it appoints penalties for delinquency. Now the form of prayer, appointed to be used by all preachers before all sermons, requires the audience, "most especially to pray for the King as Supreme Governor in these realms, over all persons, in all causes, as well *ecclesiastical* as temporal." And according to your reasoning, it would become all persons who observe Sunday as a day of religious worship, even in their own places, and agreeably to their own sentiments, to consider whether they can join in these sentiments likewise, as well as in all the other sentiments

timents contained in the liturgy of the church of England.

But you have endeavoured to obviate this conclusion, by saying, (p. 15) that “ we assemble on “ Sunday for reasons derived from the New Testament; and therefore the day is not a matter of “ indifference. And, on this account, though the “ civil magistrate sanctions the duty, we cannot neglect to discharge it.” Now this is evidently separating the religious motive, both of the appointer and of the worshipper, from the political ones that occur in the political instrument. And if we do this with respect to a Sunday, why not with respect to a fast-day? For you say (p. 17) “ if “ we assemble for public worship on a day *fixed by* “ *royal authority*, it will be generally concluded, that “ we, as well as our brethren of the establishment, “ assemble in obedience to the king’s proclamation.” And this applies both to a Sunday and to a fast-day.

Further, it deserves notice, that the observation of the 5th of November also, according to your reasoning, implies an assent to the service of the church of England, appropriated to that day. For in your letter (besides the passage in p. 33) you say, (p. 26) “ there is such a conformity between the language “ of the service appointed to be read in the established churches, and the language of the proclamation

" clamation, that whoever joined in the one must
 " be considered as approving the other," &c. P. 44,
 " If the purposes or views with which persons were
 " required to assemble appeared to me improper *in*
 " *part or in the whole*, I should have done wrong to
 " have countenanced them by a public act, whatever
 " care I might have taken in the presence of the
 " Divine Being not to countenance them by the
 " language of my addresses to him," &c. Now,
 though it is usually maintained by Christian writers,
 that miracles have ceased for many ages, yet the
 first collect in the service for the 5th of November
 begins thus, " Almighty God, who hast *in all ages*
 " showed thy power and mercy in the *miraculous*
 " and gracious deliverance of the church," &c.
 And another collect in the same service has this pas-
 sage, " O God," &c. " who on this day didst *mi-*
 " *raculously* preserve our church and state," &c.
 That your argument implies an assent to these pas-
 sages, in those who observe the 5th of Novem-
 ber, appears still further from what you add, (p.
 27) " to plead that the service is conducted by
 " Dissenters in such a manner as not to express
 " any approbation of the views and purposes for
 " which a day of *fasting* or *thanksgiving* is ap-
 " pointed, is to justify themselves on the same
 " ground on which the conforming Unitarian justi-
 " fies

"fies his attendance on Trinitarian forms of worship:
 "His mental reservations, and their peculiar and
 "guarded language of devotion, are alike at va-
 "riance with the obvious language of their exter-
 "nal acts." I conceive, however, that your in-
 tended parallel between the Unitarian worshipping
 in his own chapel, and in his own manner, on the fast-
 day, and attending Trinitarian worship in another
 chapel, on Sundays, is by no means a just one, but
 that it is more of a contrast. The proper parallel
 appears to me to be between his worshipping in his
 own place on both days; and then "the language
 "of the external act" may be easily and distinctly
 interpreted by his unequivocal mode of applying it.
 He assembles habitually as a christian for public
 worship on the first day of the week, in a different
 place from the established church, and uses a dif-
 ferent service, because he has different sentiments of
 christianity, and interprets differently the law of
 Christ's supremacy. Make the parallel then be-
 tween his habitual practice, and his practice on oc-
 casional days, to both of which civil injunctions
 apply, and the conclusion, fairly drawn, will be the
 same, that his service is different, and he assembles
 in a different place, because his religious sentiments
 are different, and he interprets differently the law
 of Christ's supremacy. And, as the civil mandates

which enjoin the observance of Sunday, of the 5th of November, and of the day of humiliation, by directing the services of the Church of England to be used on each, require conformity to Trinitarian worship, and the acknowledgment of an earthly ecclesiastical superior on any one of these days, as much as on any other of them, the Unitarian is no more chargeable with inconsistency, in observing the fast-day, than in worshipping on any other day to which a civil injunction applies. Nor is any *peculiar* guarded language of devotion necessary. Thinking as you do, (p. 29) “ that the language of devotion “ should always be calm and sober, and that great “ care should be taken to form the mind to such “ views of things as are just, before we presume to “ offer any request to the Divine Being, founded on “ these views;” great care and attention is surely requisite in *all* public prayers to avoid any thing improper.

If you should think what I have already advanced an insufficient reply, let us consider whether reasons derived from the New Testament (which are the ground upon which we both plead for the observance of Sunday) do not also apply to occasional days of worship which accord with our own sentiments. The examples of the apostles and first christians are to be imitated by us only so far as they are agree-

ple to the spirit and design of christianity. For, in one case, Paul says of Peter, " he was to be blamed." And when Paul and Barnabas sharply contended with each other, and separated, who will say this part of their conduct should be copied by us? Now, the particular instance of the practice of the apostles and first christians in assembling on the first day of the week on which Christ rose from the dead, comes strongly recommended to us, as being peculiarly adapted to impress this important fact and great evidence of the divine mission of Jesus upon the mind, and thus to forward all the purposes of the gospel. When we approve the chief design and the season for occasional worship, therefore, as promoting the true spirit of christianity, there is a similar reason for observing any particular day that will best contribute to the intended purpose. And thus, if the observance of Sunday, though enjoined by civil power, does not involve an acknowledgment of ecclesiastical authority, so neither does the observance of any occasional day that we approve; for in both cases the precise reason which the Dissenters assign for observing the day, is a pure regard to the spirit and design of christianity, unconnected with civil mandates. And, if civil authority commanding a particular translation of the Bible to be read, ought not to prevent our reading it, so neither ought

ought the same authority to prevent our doing what that Bible enjoins, or what the spirit and design of it dictates; else to what purpose do we read it? Nor does our acting agreeably to what we judge to be the spirit of christianity, imply an assent to what we think different from it in the service of the established church on an occasional day of worship, any more than it does on a weekly day of worship.

The mechanical effect of a day set apart for a fast of which you speak p. 10, I conceive to be only the natural effect of the social principle, when exercised on any fixed day towards any particular object. And in this case, the effect is that of aiding our religious purposes by the influence of our social feelings. If any particular Sunday were chosen, the same effect would ensue; and, I imagine, it would be a desirable one. The perpetual recurrence of Sunday, as a day set apart for public worship, has this effect habitually, and it is highly useful. The same effect is produced by the nation assembling on the 5th of November.

You remark of Dissenters, (p. 21) that “their assembling for public worship, on the day appointed by proclamation for a fast, is so far an act of conformity, as is evident from the occasion of their meeting, and the strain of the service.” It is a voluntary and unrestrained conformity to the time,

me, and to the religious purposes of the meeting, where these only are observed. And this conformity is in order to take the best opportunity of fulfilling what is esteemed a duty, and, because "the observance of any other day would not so well answer the purpose," p. 14. In the same manner dissenters conform on Sundays, and have done on the 5th of November, "as is evident from the occasion of their meeting, and the strain of their service." Reasons derived from the New Testament are the ground upon which Dissenters meet on the Sunday; and the same reasons, together with the Acts of parliament, and royal proclamations, are the grounds upon which the church of England meet. Dissenters, both on Sundays and on the 5th of November, separate the laws of Christ from human laws, as the rule of their conduct; and why may they not do the same on the fast-day. Conformity, to what we ^{naturally} judge to be right, cannot surely be wrong; especially when by the same act we manifest our nonconformity to that which we disapprove. The place where, and the occasion, (as pointed out by the strain of their service) on which Dissenters meet, show that they do both those on the fast-day as well as on other days of public worship.

In p. 25, you say to those who attend a place of worship where a service is used which they cannot approve,

approve, "the word of truth addressees this exhortation, Come out from among them, and be ye separate." On this ground, you think those who did not approve all the views of the proclamation, should not have assembled for public worship. But, as the same word of truth, (p. 43) which says, "Come out of her, that ye be not partakers of her sins," does likewise direct us to "worship in spirit and in truth:" I should infer, not that we were to omit worshipping, but that we were to worship in the manner which we think God requires. This is the conclusion upon which we ground our habitual public worship, as Protestants and Dissenters from the Church of England; and it is an equally proper argument for occasional worship: and you apply it to the 5th of November.

In my reply, I have endeavoured to show, that your arguments against the 19th of April apply to Sundays, and particularly to the 5th of November. In applying them to the 5th of November, I think I may plead your own authority in p. 26 and 27 of your letter, "The Dissenters are at liberty to use that form of service which best accords with their own views. This being the case, it has been thought there can be no objection to their joining in *national* acts of religion; because they can and do accommodate the language of their addressees

to the Divine Being to their own views and their own intentions of assembling for public worship. *But I contend, that if they do not meet for the express purpose for which the nation at large is required to assemble, they ought not to do it at all. The language of the act in observing days of FASTING AND THANKSGIVING is, that they observe them with the same views, and for the same purposes for which they were appointed."*

Considering the principles upon which you oppose the observance of the 19th of April, I was surprised at your defending the observance of the 5th of November, which is equally an act of national worship, appointed by civil authority, and the precise day for assembling not more necessary, as I have endeavoured to show. But I was still more surprised to find, that in the very same paragraph in which you say "the Dissenters are not chargeable with inconsistency, in observing the 5th of November," you introduce this, with only one sentence intervening, by asserting, (p. 13) that their observance even of that day "is so far from affording any intimation, that they disallow the authority of the civil magistrate to appoint days of public worship, that it is an acknowledgment of it, provided the occasion of exercising it be in their opinion a just and proper one." From these premises it might be

be inferred, that you approve the exertion of authority on the 5th of November, because you think the occasion a proper one; but that you disapprove the authority exerted on the 19th of April, only because you disapprove the occasion. These conclusions however, seem to militate against the general strain of your argument, as well as of mine. And how the assertion itself, independently of these inferences is to be reconciled with the main purport of your reasoning against me, or with "the Dissenters not being chargeable with inconsistency in observing the 5th of November," I cannot perceive.

You have made some remarks upon what I have said against the introduction of politics into public services. My argument upon this subject, as appears from the terms I use, and from the tenor of the whole paragraph, (p. 18 and 19) is chiefly directed against political sentiments that are founded upon the passionate ideas of the day, and not maturely weighed and considered, and which are likely to be changed when the mind is calmer and better informed. And what I have said respecting the unchangeableness of christianity and divine omniscience, is opposed, and expressly limited to this. For, I have particularly said, (p. 19) in conjunction with these expressions "How can discourses, intermixed with *such* transient political ideas, correspond with that gospel which

the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" And how unsuitable must *such* addresses be to an omniscient Being? And *you* allow, (p. 27) "that the religion of the New Testament is unconnected with local and temporary politics." And you (p. 29) "in seasons of general calamity, it is highly probable, the passions will be warmly agitated; and it must be acknowledged, that the language of devotion should be calm and sober. The desires of our minds, when deeply affected, might be those which were formed on insufficient grounds, and likely to be changed by a more accurate knowledge; and it must be confessed, that great care should be taken to form the mind to such views of things as are *just*, and therefore *likely to be permanent*, before we *presume* to offer any requests to the Divine Being, founded on these views."

You add, indeed, (p. 30) "if we must never pray when our passions are excited, or express any ideas which may be transient, we must not address God under affliction, though we are encouraged to do it. We must cease to be imperfect creatures, &c. I cannot therefore agree, that our addresses must be unsuitable to omniscience, because our views do not correspond with his immutable knowledge." As to *transient ideas*, you have likewise

wise spoken against introducing them into our devotions, in the passage I have just quoted from p. 29 of your letter. Human faculties are imperfect, yet the arguments we have both used are for bringing our sentiments as near the truth as we can. And this being all that is in our power, is all that I have pleaded for. With respect to addressing God under *trials that agitate or afflict us*, my argument extends only to the exclusion of improper, selfish, or passionate ideas and expressions, not to the total neglect of prayer at such seasons in which there is the most occasion for it. To have extended it thus far, would have contradicted the general purpose of my essay, which was to plead for prayer in these very circumstances. But it is consistent with my argument to plead, that upon the occasion in which our frailty is most conspicuous, as it is in times of general calamity and vice, we should guard most against its influence in our addresses to the Supreme Being. Agreeably to this, you observe, (p. 31) “our devotions should be consistent with a proper sense of our dependence on God, and of our incapacity to judge what is best for us, with a desire that he would grant our petitions only as in his perfect wisdom he knows the object of them will contribute to our own welfare, and with a cheerful acquiescence in what he sees fit to appoint.”

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With respect to politics, both in public devotions, and in public discourses, you say, (p. 32) “ we should be particularly careful with what views they are introduced, and that they do not militate against the exercise of those virtues which christianity requires us to cultivate. We should be solicitous to avoid the expression of sentiments which are not the result of mature deliberation and conviction, and not seem to assent to those which we do not approve or adopt.” And, (p. 28) you say, when we assemble for public worship and religious instruction, our attention should be fixed, *as much as possible*, to the general principles of devotion and morals.” This, I think, will imply every thing for which I am contending. The peculiar province of the pulpit is to promote the knowledge and belief of the truths, and the knowledge and practice of the duties of christian religion and good morals; and to enforce sincere piety and virtue from the certainty of a future state of retribution. And as the time allotted for public worship and instruction is so short, there seems to be none to spare for any subject but these; especially, when it is considered that the poor, who demand peculiar attention on such occasions, have so very few private opportunities for gaining religious knowledge,

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What I have said, however, on the subject of introducing politics into public services, is only to obviate a collateral objection to a voluntary compliance with the time appointed for acts of national worship when we approve it. And, which ever way the question relative to the introduction of politics be decided, the main argument for which I am contending continues the same, because the political sentiments which any man introduces will of course be his own.

Thus, have I endeavoured, Sir, to state with plainness my sentiments upon every material part, as appeared to me, of your letter, that was directed against what I had written. Whether any thing I have said, has appeared conclusive to you, or no, we shall both, I doubt not, coincide in the following sentiment of the apostle Paul, as applied to each other: "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." With this persuasion I subscribe myself

Your sincere well-wisher,

and fellow Christian,

JOHN SIMPSON.



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